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Steps to Ensure the Goals of Your Group Practice Are Met

Many factors come into play when putting together a successful dental service organization (DSO) or group dental practice. But how should you prioritize and plan your key moves? What should you focus on in the beginning to lay a good foundation for your growth and success?

It all starts with an idea, a vision of what you want your organization to be. What will the focus be for the organization? How do you want patients to view your brand? What operations and business approaches do you want to prioritize? Once you have established clear goals for your organization, there are three critical steps you should take to help ensure success:

- 1 Standardize operating procedures (SOPs)
- 2 Centralize your data (across locations) by using a robust practice management system
- 3 Recruit and train a quality staff

We talked to David Danielson, MBA, senior product manager at Henry Schein One and Karina Santos, strategic customer success manager at Henry Schein One about best practices and centralization secrets of national DSOs. These two experts interact every day with DSOs that use Dentrix Enterprise, a dental practice management software for multiple location and group private practices, DSOs, community and federally qualified health centers, and institutional dental organizations. Based on their extensive work with dental organizations, including finding ways to ensure Dentrix Enterprise helps achieve greater efficiency and productivity for DSOs, Danielson and Santos share expert insights into how practices can benefit from improving SOPs, properly centralizing data and recruiting and training a quality staff to reach their organizational goals.

1

Standardize Your Operating Procedures

Santos has more than 20 years of experience providing consulting and SOP development services for DSOs. She currently works on the Henry Schein One Customer Success team. In this role, she stresses the need for business and clinical workflows to scale and grow. For these SOPs to maximize results, they need to be easy to replicate.

In working with DSOs to help them achieve their desired outcomes, Santos outlines SOPs using the VMGO framework: Vision – Mission – Goal – Outcome. It's really important to know your end goal or your outcome for success because groups need to know where they're going as an organization.

“One of the first questions is what outcome a practice wants to achieve. Then we can align ourselves to help them work to achieve the goals that are important to them,” Santos says.

Once the vision is defined, Santos says a practice can look to plan the action steps such as tapping into the potential data sharing to improve the overall health care for patients, leveraging efficient business processes technology to provide consistent outcomes to scale, or increasing the number of patients at the practice through the use of accurate data for the population. Whatever the key organizational goal, it's essential to get everyone to follow the same process and to track and report the same data the same way. Having specific SOPs for every role in the organization provides the guidelines to manage processes and data in a standardized fashion.



2

Centralize Your Data



As a group practice or DSO considers centralizations, Santos and Danielson recommend asking two key questions:

- Why is it important to centralize?
- Do we have the right tools to centralize?

Centralization should enhance the organizational goal of focusing on patient care and treatment, and it can be an important part of growing your dental organization for a number of reasons, including having the ability to:

- Use one patient record for all locations, allowing for clinical team collaboration
- Standardize operations — having consistent processes and tools throughout the organization helps keep data and metrics uniform across locations, which helps guide overall business growth
- Consolidate real-time data/reports for your leadership team to run your business
- Use specialized employees: help desk, central billing office, call center and marketing teams
- Simplify setup, support and maintenance for new locations

The key technology tool organizations use to centralize data is their practice management software. Dentrix Enterprise has been developed specifically for the complexities of the group practice and DSO market with its award-winning workflow and robust tools. It can also be configured for the unique needs and technology requirements of DSOs.

“Because we’re so familiar with Dentrix Enterprise, we bring that into the conversation, but the reality is that we really want to focus on [connecting the practice management system with] best practices,” Danielson says.

When data collection is consistent and accessible through a centralized system, it becomes a valuable tool for everyone in the organization. Business decisions can be guided by the aggregated information, while employees at different locations can clearly see how different tasks should be managed, and what details need to be recorded. Having everything in a centralized management system makes it possible for teams working in multiple locations to operate as a cohesive unit.

3

Recruit and Train a Quality Staff



The third step Santos and Danielson recommend is to recruit and train a quality staff. The only way a growing DSO — or any business for that matter — can continue to thrive and expand is if every employee is consistently excelling in their defined roles. Recruiting great workers and properly training them is critical. This proper training deals with more than just the dental group's practice management software.

Training also needs to focus on the SOPs by job role. Related to this, Danielson and Santos suggest dental organizations consider where technology fits in with the SOPs. How do you want your staff to use your practice management system to operate your business?"

"Successful DSOs have a very clear definition of what each team member does and provides initial and ongoing training to help them become experts," Danielson says. "Many successful organizations have continuing education for their providers as well. National DSOs believe continued education for their staff that run and manage their organization is equally as important."

Again, the SOPs and the centralization processes need to be in place for everything to function at its best, but recruiting and training a staff to get the most out of these tools is equally important. Danielson adds that many groups have done online universities and other training programs that have helped the DSOs scale.

Danielson points to a large group's training success story to showcase the importance this plays in an organization's success.

"I was thinking about a large DSO that has upwards of 100 locations, and they did an amazing job with their training department," he says. "Their core training team excels at onboarding new employees using a competency-based approach built around their SOPs. But they don't stop there. They have ongoing refreshers to ensure sustainability."

One method some groups use is to have a learning management system, along with a learning development team that is in charge of creating video tutorials or handouts. This is really key to help train and onboard new and existing staff as well as duplicating and growing your organization.

Training can drastically improve efficiencies for both large and small tasks. Creating standardized workflows for everything from the handling of incoming phone calls and the processing of appointments, to patient communication, marketing and social media is just the first step. Creating a program to properly train staff on those workflows, and implementing a system for ensuring SOP compliance are both key parts of the process of building a successful and stable group practice.

Your Practice Management System Should Facilitate Growth With Each of These Steps

When it comes to implementing centralized processes for better efficiency, DSOs should take advantage of the benefits offered by a practice management system such as Dentrix Enterprise. Be sure to select a software provider with proven trainers and support teams who can help you use your software to its fullest capabilities.

Henry Schein One certified trainers can help with setting up networks properly. But customizing how the practice uses its core software is only a part of setting a dental group up for success. With its range of industry partners and software integrations, Dentrix Enterprise can be a hub for more than just tracking financials and schedules. The platform can be a jumping-off point, enhancing and streamlining all of the organization's digital and communications operations.

During software training and implementation, your trainer can assist you on implementing workflows that best suit you, Danielson and Santos say.

"Henry Schein One is a technology partner, not just a software vendor," Danielson says.

"Our objective is to help you achieve your goals," he says. "We know that running a DSOs is challenging. From interacting with DSOs, nationwide, we recognize real problems that DSOs are trying to solve. We want to make sure that you know that we're here to help."

Building a successful group dental practice starts with building the foundation for the entire organization. With today's group dental practices, that foundation needs to be virtual, and easily accessible across the entire group. When it supports well-defined SOPs, a centralized data system, and sound organizational recruiting and training structures, a group dental practice is set up for success and growth.

When DSOs craft a clear vision of their goals, and then construct a cohesive and consistent operational plan, the added functionality and efficiency of Dentrix Enterprise can help that vision become reality.

